

110TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1496

Recognizing persons of African descent in Europe.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 24, 2008

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. PAYNE, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, and Mr. JEFFERSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Recognizing persons of African descent in Europe.

Whereas the 109th Congress passed H. Con. Res. 60 and S. Con. Res. 90, recognizing African descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean, raising awareness of the racism and discrimination faced by those communities, and leading to numerous public and private sector initiatives between the United States and Latin American and Caribbean countries to improve the situation of African descendants;

Whereas the persistence of racism and discrimination in Europe similarly necessitates congressional action to raise awareness and promote public and private sector initiatives to stem this trend;

Whereas the terms “Afro-European”, “African European”, or “Black European” refers to people of African ancestry or descent born in, citizens of, or living in Europe;

Whereas more than an estimated 7,000,000 individuals of African descent currently live in and have long had a presence in Europe, forming an influential part of the African diaspora;

Whereas the story of Black Europeans remains untold, rendering many of their past and present contributions to the political and social life of Europe invisible or forgotten;

Whereas, unlike more contemporary figures, largely unknown Blacks have made significant contributions to European history and culture, including Spanish poet Juan Latino, Italian Duke Alessandro Medici, French novelist Alexandre Dumas, German scholar Anthony William Amo, French Composer Le Chevalier de St. George, British abolitionist Oladuah Equiano, and Russian General and Governor Abram Hannibal, great-grandfather of Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin;

Whereas the largest estimated populations of Black Europeans can be found in France (approximately 2,500,000), the United Kingdom (approximately 1,500,000), and the Netherlands (approximately 500,000), in addition to sizeable populations in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, Russia, Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, and Austria;

Whereas the presence of Blacks in Europe can be traced to voluntary and forced migration resulting from the geographical proximity of Europe to Africa and the Middle East, including the transatlantic slave trade, the coloniza-

tion of Africa and the Caribbean, African and African-American military deployments, the movement of refugees and asylum seekers, and educational and other professional exchanges;

Whereas, although Black Europeans have made significant achievements in and contributions to European society, large numbers have and continue to be more likely than the general population to experience discrimination and be underrepresented in leadership roles in the public and private sector as a result of the color of their skin and ancestry;

Whereas, on April 29, 2008, before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, at a hearing entitled “The State of (In)visible Black Europe: Race, Rights, and Politics”, Dr. Philomena Essed stated, “Probably the only common European experience among many, if not all, Afro-descendants is their exposure to [. . .] racism and systemic discrimination, regardless of country, socioeconomic conditions, gender, age, or level of education”;

Whereas racism has long been, and continues to be, a problem in Europe;

Whereas the 1997 European Commission opinion poll entitled “Racism and Xenophobia in Europe” reported a “worrying level of racism and xenophobia in [European Union] Member States, with nearly 33% of those interviewed openly describing themselves as ‘quite racist’ or ‘very racist’ ”;

Whereas the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (EUFRA), formerly the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, found in its 2008 and 2007 annual reports that racial and ethnic minorities were dis-

proportionately experiencing discrimination in housing, education, healthcare, employment, the criminal justice system, and access to political participation;

Whereas the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reported that racist violence and crime or hate crimes are also a continuing problem, with EUFRA reporting increases in 8 European Union countries, and Russia's SOVA Center and Human Rights First reporting over 100 racist murders and 100 violent attacks in Russia and Ukraine in 2007 and 2008, yet in many countries funds to assist victims with legal assistance and financial support while recovering from violent attacks do not exist;

Whereas prejudice and discrimination towards Black Europeans has also been linked to changes in immigration and asylum laws as a result of the growth and mainstreaming of nationalist and anti-immigrant political parties and groups, including neo-Nazis and skinheads, who believe Europe should be a monoracial society or that other races are inferior;

Whereas Black Europeans encounter everyday racism, including denials that racism exists despite the blatant use of stereotypes and derogatory terms to refer to Blacks in everyday language, the media, and textbooks;

Whereas there have been numerous efforts by the public and private sector to address racial discrimination and inequality in Europe, including the introduction of anti-discrimination and equality laws that include the legal support for special measures or positive (affirmative) action, creation of equality bodies, media campaigns, efforts to increase minority political participation, and the Sep-

tember 9, 2008, official launching of the Black European Women's Council at the European Union headquarters;

Whereas these efforts also include the September 27–29, 2007, Vienna Declaration of the Black European Women's Congress, which calls for Members of the European Union to enforce and implement laws to eradicate all forms of discrimination, provide anti-racist education and training for personnel working in educational institutions and the civil service, increase political representation, participation, and employment opportunities for Blacks, and provide mental health services for Black's impacted by racism;

Whereas, despite these efforts, international entities, such as the OSCE Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, EUFRA, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, and Experts Working Group on People of African Descent, have documented ongoing racism and xenophobia, and racial and ethnic discrimination, and called for an increase in initiatives to combat racism and inequality; and

Whereas, throughout the history of the United States, members of both the public and private sectors have exchanged information on best practices for antidiscrimination measures and racial equality with committed parties in other countries, including recent initiatives such as the “Joint Action Plan Between the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Government of the United States of America to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promote Equality”, also known as

the United States-Brazil Joint Action Plan Against Racial Discrimination: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) encourages the United States and the inter-
3 national community to recognize and honor the his-
4 torical and present-day contributions of Black Euro-
5 peans;

6 (2) recognizes that, as a result of their skin
7 color and ancestry, many Black Europeans have
8 wrongfully experienced injustices in the public and
9 private sector;

10 (3) calls upon European parliamentarians, in-
11 cluding the Organization for Security and Coopera-
12 tion in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly, to
13 engage in efforts to promote racial equality and
14 combat racial discrimination through efforts such as
15 introducing legislation, speaking out in their par-
16 liaments against racism, and working with Black
17 European and other minority communities to de-
18 velop relevant policies;

19 (4) urges European governments and members
20 of civil society and the private sector, in consultation
21 with Black European communities, to develop and
22 implement initiatives to combat racial discrimination
23 and promote racial equality in Europe, by—

1 (A) drafting and implementing anti-
2 discrimination, special measures, hate crimes,
3 migration and integration, and other laws and
4 policies to address discrimination and dispari-
5 ties and promote equality, noting the rec-
6 ommendations of the United Nations Com-
7 mittee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimina-
8 tion, the Experts Working Group on People of
9 African Descent (WGPAD), the European
10 Commission against Racism and Intolerance,
11 the European Union Fundamental Rights
12 Agency (EUFRA), the United Nations Special
13 Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism
14 and Independent Expert on minority issues, the
15 OSCE Personal Representative on Combating
16 Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, and
17 the Black European Women's Council;

18 (B) promoting and funding research, in-
19 cluding the collection of national census data on
20 Black Europeans and their inclusion in the an-
21 nual reports of the EUFRA;

22 (C) providing technical support, training,
23 and funding to Black European civil society
24 groups working to combat racism, discrimina-

tion, and inequality, and uphold basic human rights in Europe;

(D) introducing national measures to counter stereotypical images of persons of African descent, by revising textbooks, increasing efforts to include Black Europeans in history and heritage institutions, and commemorating victims of colonialism, slavery and other atrocities;

(E) developing or increasing financial support for funds to assist victims of hate crimes with legal assistance and compensation when incapacitated due to physical or emotional injuries;

(F) developing specific initiatives that address the special concerns of Black European women and youth; and

(G) recruiting, training, and hiring Black Europeans for professional positions in support of these initiatives; and

(5) urges the Secretary of State to—

(A) provide technical assistance and other support for European governments and members of the civil society and private sector to fulfill the initiatives outlined above; and

1 (B) increase support for the WGPAD.

